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## SIR JOSHUA AND MR. WHISTLER

The literary world, quite as well as the world of art, paid much attention to Mr. Whistler's "Ten o'Clock" when it was spoken, in 1888. Every one has heard of that famous lecture, and it is surprising that so few have read it, since it is one of the few things from Mr. Whistler's pen which is readily accessible to the multitude, being always in print. There is a poignant fascination about everything the gentle artist says or does, and "Ten o'Clock" is just as interesting to-day, if not so much discussed, as it was fourteen years ago, when, introducing his scathing criticism of "Ten o'Clock" tenets, Mr. Swinburne, alleviating with this compliment, said: "Much that Mr. Whistler has to say about the primary requisites and the radical conditions of art is not merely sound and solid good sense, as well as vivid and pointed rhetoric: it is a message very specially needed by the present generation in art or letters." The disagreeable things Mr. Swinburne added are not necessary to quote, since really he himself having a distorted impression, a vague conception, and perhaps little knowledge of the principles of Japanese art, his censure was unimportant because misapplied. That part of his criticism just quoted is still so applicable to the condition of the present generation of students in art or letters that this present generation is therefore reminded of "Ten o'Clock."

I think the world of art and of letters is better fitted now to receive its extraordinary wisdom and its unusual clearness than it was ten or fourteen years ago. We have made tremendous strides in the understanding of things, and it is a pity that we should overlook the clear formulation of "Ten o'Clock" in busying ourselves with an abundance of less valuable propositions of to-day's essayists.

Much wisdom clothed with wit often passes for mere jesting with the understanding of those who glory in the ponderousness of the pompous. For this reason, among the many reasons, Mr. Whistler's wit alienated those who should have acknowledged his wisdom, and "Ten o'Clock" was considered pyrotechnic. However, it did not fall to the ground, but remains a star in the heavens of art ideals.

Perhaps in another fourteen years it will be understood what was meant when Mr. Whistler astounded the academicians with the declaration, "There never was an artistic period. There never was an art-loving nation." They heard as they read, runningly, and missed the deep truth underneath. It is not my purpose to pose as Mr. Whistler's interpreter, for Mr. Whistler's precepts must expound themselves, but it is not uninteresting to pick up the little "Ten o'Clock" again and busy ourselves with yesterday's preachments.



**STUDY**  
By B. Héroux  
From a Lithograph



Never were persons more unlike, probably, than Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr. Whistler, yet Sir Joshua said nearly everything in his addresses to the Royal Academy, from 1769 to 1790, which Mr. Whistler says in his "Ten o'Clock." Not that Mr. Whistler is, for a moment, a plagiarist, but that the truths which Sir Joshua uttered were swallowed as bitter pills, without comment or objection, and the same truths, pillled, but sugared, by Mr. Whistler, raised distrust in the patients who look to be cured in the allopathic manner.

Sir Joshua said of the artist: "He regards nature with a view to his profession, and combines her beauties and corrects her defects." And Mr. Whistler said: "Nature contains the elements in color and form of all pictures, as the keyboard contains the notes of all music." Sir Joshua also used a musical illustration when he wrote: "The facility of drawing, like that of playing upon a musical instrument, cannot be acquired but by an infinite number of acts." And he said, "The works of nature are full of disproportion," just as Mr. Whistler said: "That nature is always right is an assertion artistically as untrue, as it is one whose truth is universally taken for granted. Nature is very rarely right to such an extent, even, that it might almost be said that nature is usually wrong; that is to say, the condition of things that shall bring about the perfection of harmony worthy a picture is rare, and not common at all." Then what follows would have met Sir Joshua's approbation, since he said, "Not the eye, but the mind."

Occasional paragraphs of "The Discourses" of Sir Joshua and of the "Ten o'Clock" of Mr. Whistler seem in disagreement, as when Mr. Whistler declares, "Your own instinct is near the truth, your own wit far surer guide than the untaught ventures of thick-heeled Apollos," opposed to Sir Joshua's suggestion, "I could wish that you would take the world's opinion rather than your own." Yet Sir Joshua's own attitude was nearer in accord with Mr. Whistler's.

However far-fetched the linking of the names Reynolds and Whistler may seem to the uninitiated, yet the student in painting can scarcely find two more helpful works to add to his reading than Mr. Whistler's little pamphlet of "Ten o'Clock" and "The Discourses on Art" of Sir Joshua Reynolds. This first president of the Royal Academy always urged on students of painting the necessity of becoming students of men, and of things as well. We have too many painters who paint, but who do not bring themselves into that broader field of culture so necessary to the accomplishment of great, premeditated, unaccidental things. Too few of our painters are at all versed in the literature of their art, a discourtesy which fame resents, and the world calls into account. So it is that I have not taken the direction of the reviewer or the critic, or of the literary discoverer, but have chosen to call attention to these works, because they are so helpful to the student of this day it is a pity to see them continue to be so little read.

GARDNER C. TEALL.